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Nebraska State Reform School reports

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Biennial report of the superintendent of the Nebraska State Reform School, 1st (1883)

Biennial report of the Nebraska Reform School to the Board of Public Lands and Buildings, <1883-4>

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BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

NEBRASKA

REFORM SCHOOL

TO THE

Board of Public Lands and Buildings.

For the Years 1883-4.

LINCOLN, NEB.
JOURNAL COMPANY, STATE PRINTERS.
1884.

REPORT.

NEBRASKA STATE REFORM SCHOOL,
KEARNEY, NEB., NOV. 30, 1884.

To the Honorable Board of Public Lands and Buildings:

GENTLEMEN: Agreeably to the provisions of law, I have the honor to report to you the general conditions of the school for the two years ending November the 30th, 1884.

At the date of the last report there were remaining in the school thirty-seven inmates. We now have sixty-nine boys and girls in the school, with twenty-four who are temporarily absent, making in all ninety-three inmates.

If we could have accommodated them, I am satisfied the number would have reached two hundred up to the present date; sixty, however, is all that we have room for, though there have been seventy-three in the school at one time. To make room for those crowded upon us by the courts, we were under the necessity of permitting others to leave the school on ticket of leave for four months, who had been greatly improved, but who ought in justice to the school and themselves, remained much longer.

There is in this, as in every other state, a large number of boys and girls whose only home is the streets in some city; many have parents but might better, perhaps, be orphans, who grow up familiar with vice and crime. They should be rescued from the paths that lead down to ruin, and placed as soon as possible under moral influences, where they can be made happy and useful members of society, and learn the full value of a home.

The greater portion of those who become inmates of the Reform School have never known what a home is. If they have, or

have had parents, they have never felt the influences of parental care, but have been forced and weaned from them by ill treatment. Need we ask why it is that so many thieves infest every community and fill the state prisons.

The object of the reform school is to prevent these children from pursuing the course they have engaged in and lessen, if possible, the supply to the army of thieves and rogues before they become hardened in crime.

It is evidently a great mistake, as well as an offense against the moral law for the authorities of the state to place these children who have committed trivial offences against the law among hardened criminals in the jails, even for a few hours, as the stigma has been fixed upon them that they are criminals.

We endeavor to remove all appearances of prison life from them, and encourage them to feel that though they have committed some wrong act against the law, if they will reform and do what is right in future they can gain the respect and admiration of all good people. When we accomplish this with these children they begin to have respect for themselves and for others, reform soon follows, and not until then. Experience in this work has taught us that a boy or girl destitute of self-respect has lost all moral character if they ever possessed it, and are totally unfit to mingle with respectable society. We have in this school now some boys who were committed the first of the present year, and sent to jail from four to six months, until we could make room for them. If we could have received them as soon as they were committed to the institution it would have saved them from the evils of being associated with hardened criminals in the jail for six months, and instead of coming to us with a full knowledge of the lessons and experience of such associations, they would have been improving in both body and mind, fitting themselves for an honorable life. No one doubts for a moment the evil effects of placing children with older and hardened criminals. For this reason we have asked for more buildings so that we can separate the larger and more vicious boys from the younger ones,

believing that more good can be accomplished with both classes by having them in separate buildings, and it would be well if we could keep those who have committed grave offenses from coming in contact with those who have only committed some trivial offense.

THE SCHOOL.

has been continued throughout the year under an experienced teacher. We have endeavored to have all the children attend school regularly, except for a few days during the planting season and gathering in the winter's supply of vegetables, etc.

The methods of teaching and the studies pursued, are such as will bring practical results. Each exercise given is calculated for the improvement of all the children, both morally and intellectually. The school is divided into two classes or divisions, and so arranged that all those who have made about the same advancement in their studies attend the same school, which lessens the number of classes and enables the teacher to give each class special supervision and instruction. From our regular examinations we find that the boys and girls have made very commendable progress, many of them advancing far beyond our anticipation.

MORAL CULTURE.

Our aim has been to effect a complete and permanent reformation in the character and lives of the children committed to our care. We present to them the three great objects of life—their duty to God, to society, and themselves. We encourage them to believe that by doing right there are opportunities awaiting them, and that the harvest will surely come if they but continue in the right.

Our chapel services at 3 o'clock Sabbath afternoons have been interesting and instructive, awakening in the hearts of many a deep sense of their true condition.

Our Sabbath School in the morning is under the immediate care of the Assistant Superintendent and Matron. We use the international lesson leaves; have good singing, and the recitations by the children are very interesting. A number of the pupils have expressed a desire to reform and become true Christians.

HEALTH OF THE SCHOOL.

The officers and pupils have enjoyed excellent health. We have to thank an overruling Providence that up to this date no death has occurred among the inmates. Their health is specially cared for, as the regular routine of the Reform School is well adapted to its promotion. Regular habits, early rising and retiring to rest, with cleanliness, wholesome food, labor on the farm one-half day and in school the other half, with sufficient recreation on the play grounds, is evidently productive of good health, and goes a great way in making the inmates happy and contented.

Labor is a great help in the Reform School. Especially is this the case in farming and gardening, and in the cultivation of flowers and plants. Boys become interested in watching the growth of plants and vegetables, and their minds are diverted in this way from mischief. For this reason we have so arranged the classes that each boy has an opportunity to perform some labor on the farm or garden. Many of them have manifested a great interest in the cultivation of flowers, whilst others delight in caring for the stock, and in general farm work.

We have secured homes for a number of boys, who were sent out on ticket-of-leave for four months from the school among farmers who were willing to exercise a guardian care over them and pay them good wages, and they have given entire satisfaction to their employers. Among the number sent out in this way only one that we are aware of has failed to be true to his employer and himself.

The fact that so many of them have met with success, both in

the school and since leaving it, has encouraged those remaining with us, and they exhibit a desire to do likewise and make themselves self-supporting.

LIBRARY.

A good library is sadly needed in this institution, and we have asked for the small amount of six hundred dollars to use for this purpose. During the long winter evenings the children could spend an hour each evening very profitably if they had a good book to read, and it will more than repay the small expense of supplying them for their use.

FARM AND GARDEN.

The farm and garden have yielded a fine crop, and we have stored away an abundance of vegetables for the winter's supply, of potatoes, onions, cabbage, turnips, beets, carrots, etc., besides the large amount consumed during the summer months. We have made preparations to farm more extensively the coming season, if we can have the means to purchase another team and farming implements, etc. The estimated amounts of farm and garden products for the year 1884, were as follows: Rye, 285 bushels; oats, 1,000 bushels; corn, 2,500 bushels; onions, 500 bushels; turnips, 600 bushels; carrots, 25 bushels; potatoes, 2,000 bushels; white soup beans, 45 bushels; cabbage, 4,000 heads; peas (field), 5 barrels; peas (sweet), 4 barrels; beets (sugar), 500 bushels. We have on hand for seed for the next year, 1½ barrels sweet peas, 2 barrels sugar beet seed, ½ barrel onion seed. In addition to this we raised about eight acres of broom corn, which grew to perfection. We have also planted several thousand asparagus roots which will produce next season.

Estimates for the necessary appropriations for the next two years are submitted. The usual amount for salaries—five thousand dollars, with an addition of one thousand dollars—have been asked, to enable us to employ two more teachers, should

the number of inmates increase as rapidly as we anticipate they will.

We have also estimated for an increase in the employes' wages, to enable us to employ an engineer and night watchman.

In addition, we have asked for twenty thousand dollars for the purpose of erecting two family buildings, which will be needed before they can be completed. We would also suggest that the building we now occupy as a family building be kept for that purpose, instead of a workshop, as the law of 1883 contemplates. This building cost the State some ten thousand dollars, and it would cost one thousand dollars now to fit it up for shop purposes, and would then not be as suitable as one built and equipped with machinery, tools, etc., at a cost of not more than ten thousand dollars. Besides, this building will be very much needed to accommodate the children who are crowding in upon us.

We have also asked for an appropriation of seven hundred dollars for a sorghum mill and fixtures complete, including sheds for the same, believing that we can cultivate the cane and manufacture the syrup to supply the institution, and find a ready market for any we may have to dispose of, which would be a revenue to the school. This work can be done by the boys, under the supervision of the teachers.

A small amount has been asked for fruit trees and small fruit plants, which it is very necessary to have in an institution of this kind.

An appropriation for farm expenses is also very much needed, for the purchase of horses, cows, wagons, harness, and general repairs to the same.

We would also call your attention to the fact that no appropriation has ever been made for medicine, and for the attendance of a physician if needed. We have also asked for the small sum of twelve hundred dollars, for this purpose.

We have found it very difficult to secure the means to send children who were entitled to their discharge to their homes, owing, in part, to the fact that no appropriation has been made

for that purpose, and many of their parents are not able to send them money to come home with; besides some are orphans, and had we the money, we could send them where they could readily find employment. A small appropriation for this purpose is very much needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

To you, gentlemen of the Board of Public Lands and Buildings, we tender our thanks for the uniform kindness you have shown us, and for the personal interest you have manifested for the success of the school. We also wish to express our thanks to kind friends who visited and addressed the school; also to the Baptist Sunday-school of Kearney, for a number of Sunday-school papers; to Mrs. J. D. Seaman and Mrs. L. D. Grant, of Kearney, for books and papers which they gave the children; also to the publishers of newspapers who furnished copies of their papers for the use of the school.

Respectfully submitted,

SAMUEL C. MULLIN,

Superintendent.

STATEMENT

Of cash received and expended by Samuel C. Mullin, Superintendent under direction of the Board of Public Lands and Buildings to Nov. 30th, 1884.

RECEIPTS.		
From sale of cattle and hogs	$1419 78	
Warrant on State Treasurer	504 74	
Total		$1924 52
EXPENDITURES.		
Paid on sundry accounts		$1600 56
Balance on hand November 30, 1884		$323 96

STATISTICS.

TABLE No. I.

		52
No. boys received from opening of the school to Dec. 9, 1882		11
No. girls " " " " "		4
No boys discharged, etc., " " " " "		2
No. girls " " " " "		
No boys remaining in school Dec. 9, 1882		28
No. girls " " " "		9
Total remaining in school Dec. 9, 1882		37

TABLE No. II.

No. boys received between Dec 9, 1882, and Dec. 1, 1884	41
No girls " " " " " "	14
No. boys on ticket of leave, etc	13
No. girls " "	10
No boys and girls received	55
No boys and girls received on ticket of leave, etc	23

TABLE No. III.

No. boys received since opening of the school to Dec. 1, 1884	73	
No. girls " " " " "	25	
Total boys and girls received since opening of the school to Dec. 1, 1884		98
No. boys on ticket of leave, etc	17	
No. girls " "	12	
Total		29
No. boys remaining in the school Dec 1, 1884	56	
No. girls " " " "	13	
Total		69

TABLE No. IV.,

Showing Cause of Commitment.

Disorderly conduct	37	Horse-stealing	9
Larceny	30	Assault and battery	4
Grand larceny	1	Destruction of property	2
Burglary	9	Vagrancy	5
Forgery	1		

TABLE No. V.

Age at Commitment (Reckoned from Nearest Birthday).

Seven years of age	1	Twelve years of age	15
Eight " "	2	Thirteen " "	18
Nine " "	4	Fourteen " "	9
Ten " "	5	Fifteen " "	31
Eleven " "	6	Sixteen " "	7

Average age at commencement, 13 3-16.

TABLE No. VI.,

Showing Social Condition.

Parents of whom are living	34	Mother of whom is dead	22
Parents of whom are dead	11	Parents of whom are separated	9
Father of whom is dead	20	Parents of whom nothing is known	2